

Assemblyman
PAUL KORETZ
Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Koretz Bill Addressing Shortcomings in Parole System Clears State Assembly
AB 854 Revises the Mission of the State Corrections System

Sacramento -- The California State Assembly today approved AB 854, legislation introduced by Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) which would expand the mission statement of the Department of Corrections to address the State's incredibly high recidivism rates. AB 854 expands the current "purpose of imprisonment" language in current law to include "incapacitation by incarceration, and preparation for successful reentry into the community" -- in addition to "punishment."

A recent Little Hoover Commission report found that California puts a greater percentage of felons on parole each year than any other state, and that upwards of 90% of these parolees are unprepared to reenter the community largely due to the fact that they can't get a job, steer clear of drugs and alcohol or find a home. As a result, they are more likely to commit more crimes, become more of a threat to the community's public safety, and find themselves back behind bars. This, according to the Commission, is a direct result of the culture at the Department of Corrections where the focus is clearly on punishment of the inmates.

According to Assemblyman Koretz, "California releases about 125,000 inmates from prison each year. These prisoners are given \$200 and a bus ticket, and then are sent back into society without the assistance they need to make a successful transition back to life on the outside. To address public safety concerns, it is up to the Legislature to recognize the shortfalls of the system and make public policy to fix these problems. Clearly the state is offering little to no assistance to help prisoners make the transition."

Mr. Koretz reminded all of his colleagues during floor debate on the bill that the Bush Administration is launching a very progressive campaign to lower recidivism rates in federal prisons around the country. According to President Bush, "America is the land of second chances, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life."

"The President saw what is happening in America's correctional systems and recognizes the need for change," said Koretz. "It is our duty to look beyond the simple warehousing of these offenders: we must explore different options for preparing these people for re-entry to society."

AB 854, which is supported by the Little Hoover Commission and the Doris Tate Crime Victims Bureau, now proceeds to the California State Senate for consideration.